Catholicon.

THE EXPEDIENCY OF AN EXPLICIT STIPULATION BETWIXT THE Parochial Miniſters AND THEIR CONGREGATIONS.

OR,

An ESSAY to prove that the Intervention of Solemn Mutual Promiſes betwixt the Parochial Miniſters and their people (*Faithfully to diſcharge their Relative Duties to one another*) would be uſeful and expedient for theſe ends:

To promote in Clergy-men Regularity of Life, and Diligence in their Miniſterial Function.

To increaſe in the Lay Pariſhioners, Chriſtian Knowledge, Sincere Godlineſs, with a Free and Friendly Converſation.

To give a Stop to Separation, and Reduce Diſſenters to the Communion of the Church without uſing Secular Compulſion.

To ſecure the Peace of the Nation.

To inlarge Trade, and make Proviſion for the Poor.

And that all this may be effected without the leaſt Innovation, or alteration of the preſent Legal Eſtabliſhment of the Church of *England*.

Humbly tendred to the Conſideration of all Engliſh Proteſtants, by a Parochial Miniſter.

London, Printed. 1674.

THE PREFACE.

I Intend not in this Treatise to give Rules to any of my Brethren, much less to prescribe to Authority; But I presume that so far as the Holy Scriptures, and the Laws of the Land, and sound Prudence appear on the side of my undertaking, it will find peaceable reception with all, who adhere yet to the Protestant Church of England: *and I desire no man to admit it further, than that warranty is annexed.*

And it being designed only to promote the good ends mentioned in the Title-page: I may expect that it will not find a bitter Adversary, if any, amongst the Dissenters from the Order of Worship and Discipline legally established amongst us.

For no man hath just reason to be angry, if Consenters to that Order endeavour to promote amongst themselves Christian knowledge with an holy Conversation, by building upon the antient Foundations; namely, the Holy Scriptures and Sound Antiquity, with their Primitive most prudent Reformation.

I do not disown it, that my endeavours in this discourse are in part collined at the stopping the growth of rigid Sepa-

ration: But the means I use is only such, as may consist with Sincere and Christian Charity to all Dissenting Brethren, and a real desire of their Peace:

"And that which put me upon this undertaking was, a "firm perswasion, that keeping up the Parochial Assemblies of "the Church of England *(in that good Order and Unity, which "the Gospel of Christ and the Laws of the Kingdom require,) "is one of our strongest Fences and Securities against Pro- "phaneness, Strife, Uncharitableness, and other enemies of "Sincere and Solid Christianity: and that the Dissipation "and breaking of the Parochial Churches will prove the pul- "ling down our walls, to bring in that* Trojan Horse, *which "our Gates are not wide enough to admit.*

But yet I freely declare (if the declaration of so mean a person be worth taking notice of by any) that it was far from my intendment in this work to endeavour to obstruct any favours and relaxations, which may be thought to be intended by our Governours to Pious and Peaceable Dissenters, in order to their bringing them in (with fair salvoes to their Consciences) to help with us to do the work of our Great Master with one heart and in one way.

And certainly the breaking in of the Floods of ungodliness upon the Age and Nation, calls aloud for the uniting their and our strengths, to bear up with arms and breasts against them.

And I am confident that my Proposals in this Paper will not be found to inlarge the distances amongst Brethren: For the removal of which, by pouring out upon us all a Spirit of Meekness, Love, and mutual Forbearance, I daily pray to the God of Mercy and Peace, which I beseech him to grant, even in our days, if it be his blessed will, according to the unspeakable riches of his mercy towards Sinners in Christ Jesus our only Mediator and Saviour, Amen.

CAP.

CAP. I.

An Account of the Nature of the Explicit Stipulation propoſed.

THE Laws of this Land as well as the Inſtitutions of the Church, do ſuppoſe ſome Relation to intervene betwixt the Parochial Miniſters and the people of their ſeveral Pariſhes committed to their Charge.

By a [Pariſh] I mean, a compaſs of Ground, containing in it ſuch a number of Chriſtian Inhabitants, as may Ordinarily aſſemble at one place for publick worſhip, and who are, if duly qualified, obliged by Law ſo to Aſſemble for the celebration of all parts of publick worſhip.

And not only by Law but by Scripture alſo, in which there is not one example to be found of a Chriſtian, who did cohabit with and among Chriſtians, and yet ordinarily at times of worſhip did ſeparate from them, to go and aſſemble with other Chriſtians elſewhere.

So that all Goſpel Aſſemblies for worſhip were *Cœtus Parochianorum*, or *Cohabitantium*, who might be ready to obſerve and help one another, in relation both to temporal and ſpiritual wants and neceſſities.

This Relation of the Miniſters of ſuch Parochial Congregations to their people, both obligeth and impowereth every ſuch Miniſter to diſpence the Word and Sacraments, and perform other Miniſterial duties, to all the People of his Pariſh, who are willing and duly qualified to receive them.

And the ſame Relation inableth ſuch Pariſhioners to challenge at his hands the diſpenſation of the ſaid Ordinances to them, and obligeth them ordinarily to receive the ſame from him.

And it is far from me to intimate by these Papers, that all or the greatest part of the present Parish Ministers of the Church of *England* are unsuccessful in their work, assigned to them by the Word of God and the Laws of the Land.

For there are multitudes of Christians who are ready to come forth and own it, "That God made use of the Ministry of Confor-"mists, to awaken them to a serious consideration of the spiritual "and eternal concernments of their souls, and to bring them to a "right understanding and practice of Repentance towards God, and "Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and to a constant exercise of "Mortification both of carnal and worldly lusts, and to consecrate "themselves intirely to live to the Glory of God their Maker and "Saviour, and to devote themselves to do or suffer any thing that "may promote in themselves or others the knowledge and acknow-"ledgement, the fear, trust, and love of God, with delight in him "(as our sufficient portion) and submission to him as our Sove-"raign, with Faith and Hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ; who of "God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and "Redemption.

"And they will further testifie, that, by the Preaching and Ex-"ample of the Conforming Clergy, they were brought to imbrace "an universal Charity towards all men, even enemies, and to take up "a more special Love and Delight in all those who own the fear of "God, and adorn the Gospel of Christ, by an holy, humble and use-"ful conversation, yea though such should dissent from them in the "present minute differences about things Indifferent, *&c.*

If to be wrought up to this frame by the Spirit of God (who alone gives the increase, whoever endeavours to plant or water) be *Conversion*, Multitudes (to the praise of the Glory of the Grace of God) have been, and are daily Converted by the Ministry of the Church of *England*.

But yet I apprehend, and shall endeavour to make it good in this present Essay, that not only the more immediate ends of the Ministry would (probably) be more effectually promoted by such an explicit Confœderation intervening betwixt the Parochial Ministers and their people, but many other appendant advantages would thence result to the whole body of the Nation, as I have insinuated in my Title-page.

I pre-

I presume that all knowing Christians will grant, that the ends wherefore Christ by his Apostles did institute Ministers in the Churches (I mean amongst persons already converted to the faith) were at least these following, "That they might watch over the "souls of their flocks, that they might administer to them the "Word and Sacraments, that they might in the name of their peo- "ple assembled with them, and with the concurrence of their peo- "ples hearts and mouths also, (at least in saying *Amen*) offer up "Confession of Sins, Prayers, Praises and Thanksgivings in the pub- "lick Assemblies; That they might Instruct, Admonish, Reprove "and Comfort their People, as their condition should require, and "that not only in publick Preaching and Catechising, but in Perso- "nal Conference, and by teaching from House to House; That they "might visit the Sick, and promote the due relief and maintenance "of the Poor of the Flock; That they might baptize the Children "of Believers and Adult Persons duly qualified, and that they "might receive to the full Communion of the Church in the Eucha- "rist, such Minor Members, as being baptized in their Infancy, are "grown up to a due measure of the knowledge of God, and Christ, "and his Gospel, and are of unblameable lives, and do make so- "lemn profession to stand to their vow made in Baptism.

That all these are duties incumbent upon Ministers, even under the Parochial Form, I hope will be granted, and shall not trouble my Reader with a proof of them, till they are contradicted,

And that no Law of the Land, or Ecclesiastical Constitution, re- strains any Parochial Minister from the faithful discharge of all those duties, is undeniably evident, in that those Laws confirm to Ministers their setled Maintenance, for this very cause, that they might be encouraged to be faithful in the service of God and of his Church, in the premised duties.

And it is evident also, that the most Reverend Fathers of the Church (the Bishops) would not only encourage Ministers to be faithful herein (as some of us have found by address to our pious and learned Diocesans) but that they would also rejoyce over such diligent and faithful Ministers, and thank God for them, and make mention of them in their prayers without ceasing.

So that upon an impartial search I believe it will be found, that one of the chiefest reasons why this work is not done more effectu- ally, is to be laid to the charge of Parochial Ministers and their People.

And

And the greateſt hindrance of them in doing mutually their duties herein, will, I preſume, be found to be this, "Becauſe Miniſters enter upon their charge with ſo little of ſolemnity, and "without ſuch particular application to the people at their entrance, "as might advantage them in their future work.

For if we conſult common experience, we ſhall find that when any Perſons enter upon any Office of Truſt for others benefit, the want of due ſolemnity at their entrance, doth not only render them leſs careful to conſider and diſcharge their duty; but alſo thoſe, for whoſe benefit Officers are intruſted, are both leſs inclined to ſubmit to them in the diſcharge of their Office, and more prone contumaciouſly to oppoſe and diſcourage their Officers, when they attempt faithfully to do their duty.

Now it is but a little engine, that I propoſe, as likely to remove this and other great weights and miſchiefs with, "Namely, that at "every Miniſters entrance upon his charge, there ſhould paſs a "ſolemn Stipulation and Promiſe betwixt him and his People; and "the ſame ſhould alſo with all convenient ſpeed be ſolemnly made "betwixt thoſe Miniſters (who are already ſetled in Pariſhes) "and their People.

I ſhall not be ſo preſumptuous as to impoſe upon any of my Brethren any forms of my own deviſing: But yet that my Reader may clearly underſtand, what I aim at, it is neceſſary that I ſet down ſome form of words, which might be ſuitable for the tranſaction of that ſolemnity: Though I know that abler perſons will eaſily find more apt and more comprehenſive terms, than mine are.

I will therefore ſuppoſe that ſome ſuch forms as theſe following may conveniently be deviſed for this buſineſs.

"I *N. N.* legally preſented, inſtituted and inducted into the "Rectory (or Vicaridge) of *N.* in the Dioceſs of *N.* do ſolemnly "promiſe in the preſence of God to the Pariſhioners of the ſaid Pa"riſh of *N.* That during my legal imcumbency and poſſeſſion of the "ſaid Rectory (or Vicaridge) I will through the Grace of God "endeavour faithfully to diſcharge amongſt them and for their be"nefit, the Miniſtry which I have received of the Lord: I will de"clare to them the Goſpel of the Grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, "and inſtruct them in the ſaving truths thereof, both by publick "Preaching and Catechiſing, and by private conference, as I have opportunity:

"opportunity: I will labour to secure them, from those that would "pervert them, to either sins or errors; I will endeavour to esta-"blish the weak, to comfort the disconsolate, and to reform the "disorderly by admonition and reproof; or if any continue obsti-"nate after my private reproof, I will proceed in my endeavours "for their reformation in such effectual ways as the Gospel of "Christ and the Laws of the Land do warrant me to pursue: I "will visit their sick, and endeavour that due provision be made for "the Poor of the Parish, I will constantly at due periods of time "(unless hindred by sickness or other lawful impediments) admi-"nister amongst them the Sacraments, and other parts of publick "worship according to the authorized forms of the Church of "*England*: I will prepare their Children by Catechising, that "they may be confirmed by the Bishop of the Diocess (where "such confirmation can with due solemnity and convenience be ob-"tained) or that they may be admitted to full communion with "the Church in the Sacrament (commonly called the Lords Sup-"per) upon their serious profession to stand to the Covenant, which "they made in Baptism. And in my discharge of all this I shall "submit my self to the oversight and guidance of the Lord Bishop "of the Diocess.

Witness my Hand.

The Parishioners may subscribe some such form as this.

"I *N. N.* Inhabitant of the Parish of *N.* in the Diocess of *N.* "do promise by the Grace of God to live as becomes the Gospel, in "charity with all men, and unity of more special love with the vi-"sible Catholick Church, that is, with all that profess the faith of "Christ crucified: And that I will hold constant communion with "the Church of *England*; that is, with all those Christian Sub-"jects of the Kings most excellent Majesty, who are united in the "profession of those articles of Doctrine, and in the exercise of "those Forms of publick worship, and in submission to that Eccle-"siastical discipline that are agreeable to the Scriptures and owned "by the Laws of this Realm: And I will generally and ordinarily as-"semble with the rest of the Parishioners of *N.* aforesaid, at the Pa-"rish Church there, for the celebration of all parts of the established "publick worship by Mr. *N. N.* Rector or Vicar there, and that I

" will own the ſaid Mr. *N. N.* as my immediate Guide in ſpiritual
" things, under the inſpection of the Right Reverend Father in
" God the Lord Biſhop of the Dioceſs: And that I will attend up-
" on the Preaching of the Word, and Catechiſing, and Admini-
" ſtration of the Sacraments by the ſaid Mr. *N. N.* and ſubmit to
" his admonitions, and give him all due honour for his work ſake.
" And that I will readily and chearfully do my duty (as a fellow
" member of the ſame body) to all the Pariſhioners of the ſaid Pa-
" riſh of *N.* in labouring to build them up in the moſt holy Faith,
" and in provoking them to love, and to good works, and in com-
" municating to thoſe of them that ſhall need relief, according to
" that eſtate, which God hath or ſhall bleſs me with: And that I
" will mark thoſe who cauſe diviſions and avoid them: And that if
" I ſhall happen to remove my dwelling out of the Pariſh of *N.*
" aforeſaid, I will deſire and receive a Certificate from the Miniſter
" and Pariſhioners here, to the Miniſter and Pariſhioners of the Pa-
" riſh, to which I ſhall remove (That I have lived in communi-
" on with them, and with the Church of *England*) and I ſhall like-
" wiſe deſire Letters of Commendation from the Miniſter and Pa-
" riſhioners of this Pariſh, to the Miniſter and People of the Pa-
" riſh to which I ſhall remove, requeſting them that they will receive
" me (with thoſe of my family that are qualified for it) to Com-
" munion with them in Holy Worſhip: And I ſhall be ready to
" teſtifie by like ſolemn promiſe my readineſs to joyn in Communi-
" on with that Miniſter and Parochial Congregation to whom I
" ſhall remove, as I did before with the Miniſter and People of
" this Pariſh of *N.*

Witneſs My Hand.

Theſe or the like ſolemn promiſes do not (as far as I am able to apprehend) ſo much as ſhake one Pin in the preſent Fabrick of either Church or State: Nor in the Stipulation is there any thing promiſed by either the Miniſters or the People, but what I judge they are obliged already to do and execute by the general precepts of the Goſpel, or the Eccleſiaſtical Laws and Conſtitutions of this Realm, or Chriſtian Prudence, though they ſhould never make and ſubſcribe ſuch expʀcit promiſes as theſe are.

I am

I am ſure that Miniſters oblige themſelves expreſly to all this at their Ordination, before the Biſhop, and Presbyters, and Congregation then aſſembled.

And I eaſily grant that it is only matter of expedience and prudence (as Eccleſiaſtical affairs now ſtand in *England*) that this mutual covenanting ſhould be ſo expreſs and ſolemn (for the Miniſter and Peoples doing their mutual duties to one another as Offices of Relations, implies in both a Conſcience, that they are under an Obligation to one another, which may not improperly be called an implicit Covenanting:)

And therefore if any man ſhall riſe up againſt theſe Papers, I requeſt him to remember, "That the Controverſie betwixt us is likely to be only this, *whether what he* ſhall offer be in the ballance "of Chriſtian prudence of more probability to promote thoſe great "ends of piety and peace, *&c.* than this which I propoſe.

And if any can offer better Expedients, or ſhall evince that mine deſerve not to be eſteemed ſuch, I reſolve to be no Heretick in Politicks or Prudentials, deſiring in uprightneſs to be conformed to St. *Paul*'s profeſſion to do all things for the truth, and nothing againſt it.

In the mean time I will labour to ſhew how uſeful this Order would be to the ends propoſed.

CAP. II.

The uſefulneſs of the Parochial Stipulation, to promote regularity of life in the Miniſters and their People, with Brotherly Love, and good Neighbourhood.

IT is plain to every mans obſervation, that all the perſwaſives of men to any undertaking (whether by repreſenting the attempt as neceſſary, or beneficial, or honourable, or under any other reſpects) have no longer force than they are kept preſent, and fixed in the mind and imagination of the Undertaker: So that when once thoſe arguments are ſlipt out of the thoughts, the attempt goes on very dully, becauſe promoted only by the habitual impreſſion, yet remaining upon the Phancy.

The Solemnity therefore of this promiſe would fix upon Miniſters ſuch a laſting and warm ſenſe of their duty, and ſo frequently re-

n.w their thoughts of it, as would not probably permit them easily to grow remiss and inadvertent. For indeed the promise made to many, and before many witnesses, would be apt to awaken in Ministers a remembrance of their duty upon the very sight of any of those, to whom, and before whom they made their ingagement.

But why should I trouble my Reader with a more large proof of that, which I think no man can deny, who is but Master of so much judgement and phancy as to present to his own imagination (as it were in different Scenes) One Person hasting and posting to his Living as to a Preferment only, and another Person gravely and considerately entring upon his imployment with such solemn Application to the People as this we speak of, "Letting them know, he comes "amongst them with a desire and purpose, through Gods assistance, "to serve to the Glory of God, and their edification in the truth, "as it is in Jesus Christ.

Which of these two in any mans judgement, is likeliest to pursue the work of his Office with the more vigorous diligence?

Besides, this very solemnity of entrance would give the Minister such an esteem with the people, as would highly advantage his future discharges: For when themselves had thus by Covenant received him, they would look upon him with all affectionate respects as their Guide, yea they would entertain him as an Angel of God.

Whereas now, the People, till they have trial of us, keep at a distance, and are shy and jealous of us; and if after some time they find, that we are not proud and contentious, or strict in looking after our dues, many of them are not much further solicitous; intimating therein, that in the present state of Parishes, "the care of "many Parishioners is, rather to have a well-humour'd and quiet "Neighbour, than an able and faithful Minister.

And there is no question to be made, but that the like Postnate Solemnity would strengthen the sense of duty in us, who are already entred upon our imployments, as that which is Preliminary would do to them that enter with it.

And that also it would make our Ministry more acceptable and successful for the future, is not to be doubted; Besides, that this would influence the whole body of the Ministers, to make them regular and exemplary in their conversation is a presumption so rational, that I need not stay to prove it. For no doubt Ministers thus solemnly obliging themselves to walk as Examples to their

Flocks

Flocks in all manner of holy Converſation, would both in Conſcience and prudence ſet a ſtrict guard both over their lives and languages, remembring the [wo] due to them by whom offences do come.

But I muſt further let my Reader know, that my projection is, not only, that this Stipulation ſhould once be ſolemny made, and never after be publickly Recognized, ſo that the Subſcriptions of Miniſters and People being locked up in the Parish-Cheſt, ſhould ſo remain till Worms and Moths had conſumed the Parchment or Paper:

But this I think, may prudently and piouſly be done, further, namely that on the Lords day, before the day of the Celebration of the Communion (whether monthly, or quarterly, or after celebrated) the Miniſter ſhould after Evening Prayers recount before the people the promiſes mutually given, exhorting them to remember, and faithfully to fulfil the ſame, both towards him and towards one another, and the whole Church of God, and that he ſhould promiſe on his part with all fidelity, through the Grace of God to look to his diſcharge of his duty to them.

Next, let us conſider what are likely to be the effects of this Covenant amongſt the people.

Firſt, That it would promote holineſs of Converſation amongſt them, is warrantably inferred, both becauſe the Miniſters oblige themſelves to a more ſpecial and particular care of every ſingle perſon of their Flock, and they of the Flock are obliged to a mutual care of one another, and every one by this Covenant, obligeth himſelf ſincerely to endeavour to walk as becomes the Goſpel: And this particularity of relation, by ſolemn promiſe interceeding betwixt the Miniſter and them, would put the Miniſter on to perſonal and private applications by way of inſtruction or admonition, which have their effect ordinarily beyond the general declarations of the truths of the Goſpel, in Catechiſing, or Preaching, or general reprehenſions of vices in ſuch publick diſcourſes.

Beſides, they would be under a conſtant expectancy that upon their irregularity they ſhould be dealt with after our Saviours Method, *Matth.* 18. 15. And that when they had been perſonally and privately admoniſhed, and did not reform, they ſhould be notified to the Congregation, and upon further obſtinacy be preſented to thoſe publick Eccleſiaſtical Officers, who are impowred by Law

to take congnizance of the same. And that such Presentments would not end, only in paying the fees of the Court, and some Commutation mony there: Nor could they imagine, that the Parochial Congregation to whom the Offence and Scandal was given, should never inquire what is done upon the presentment, or require satisfaction from the offending party, before they received them to Communion again; And we may reasonably presume that all the pious Fathers of the Church, the Bishops with the Ecclesiastical Officers under them, would take care that such satisfaction should be given by the Delinquent: And none of this would bring any sensible innovation or alteration in Church affairs.

And further, that hereby the people would be spirited to a free and Christian Neighbourhood amongst themselves is not at all to be doubted, seeing it is the Ordinary Consequence of Combinations to give to the Combined a mutual kindness and confidence to, and in, one another.

Nay more, whereas all other combinations that are made on the principles of universal and Catholick recusancy of Communion with other Christians (and there are more Catholick Recusants in *England* than Papists) do narrow mens affections towards others, and cause them to malign, censure, damn and despise those (who are not of their own bran and leaven) it may justly be hoped that this coalition and combinement, founded on the truly Catholick Principles of the Church of *England* (which unchurcheth not nor reprobateth Christians of any form, that hold repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ) would give such an impression of humility and charity to all the Parishioners, as that the Dissenters themselves should find the blessed and benevolent warmth and influence of it, whilst we endeavour to live in the exercise of Charity and mutual good offices with all conscientious Dissenters, and follow peace both amongst our selves and with all men.

One thing more I hope I may mention without raising the scorn of any sorts of Readers, namely, "That in process of time this "procedure would not only reform scandalous Ministers, but "scandalous Livings also: I mean those poor Livings (as they are called) upon which even a frugal person cannot live, and provide things honest in the sight of all men for himself and for his family.

Which

Which were not indeed so poorly endowed Originally, but first by the Popes Appropriations of the great Tithes, to Orders of Monks and Nuns, and after by the Impropriations of the same by King *Henry* the 8th. to Lay-men, and by other incroachments of the Laiety both in pretended Prescriptions and several other wayes (not proper here to be reckoned up) many Parish-Churches (especially in Cities and Corporations) are deprived of a due maintenance for the Ministers. And Religion thereby receives as much damage, as by almost any one of Satans later projects against the same. Against which I propose this Parochial Stipulation, as a Remedy very probable to be effectual; for undoubtedly the Combined Parishioners would by the permission of those in Authority, and by the assistance of pious Patrons either buy in Impropriated Tithes, or raise an honourable maintenance for their Minister some other way.

I will add further, That whereas now upon the decay of strength in aged Ministers, the People are left too oft only to the guidance of a Curate, that is of small abilities and small allowance, because many Livings will not afford better Salaries (if a competency be continued to them who have spent their time and strength amongst the People:) We may warrantably hope, that the people of the Parochial Combination, will neither be so ungrateful to him who hath faithfully laboured amongst them, as to urge a larger allowance from him than his income will bear, nor will they be so unconcerned for their own souls, as to forbear to raise by contribution a fit allowance for an able Assistant.

I will add this further, That it cannot be feared that People thus ingaged will permit that the Parish Clarks should be licentious Ale-Drapers or otherwise loose or vain persons. But they will require that they be of a prudent and inoffensive Conversation: The like care we may hope that the Parishioners and Ministers would take about the Election of persons prudent and conscientious, to discharge the Offices of Churchwardens and Sidesmen, and not suffer these Offices to go by House-row, and be laid upon the shoulders of those, who know neither the importance of their Office, nor the nature or sense of the Oaths they are required to take.

CAP.

CAP. III.

The Expediency of the Parochial Stipulation to reduce Diſſenters to the Unity of the Church, and ſecure thoſe, who at preſent do Conform, from falling away.

IF there be any conſolations in Chriſt, if any comfort of Love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and mercies, Thoſe Chriſtians moſt taſte of the ſweetneſs thereof, who ſtrive to preſerve the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and rejoyce over all impartially that own the fear of God, and the faith of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: and who can according to the dictates of Catholick Charity *and Evangelical Love (truly ſo called)* freely joyn in all acts of holy Communion, with any Chriſtians amongſt whom their lot is caſt to be, where the Communion is not clogged with urged compliance to ſinful things, and who do not obſtruct others coming into Communion with themſelves by any ſinful or unneceſſary requirements.

And it is no difficulty to prove that this propenſity to *Catholick Communion* is the healing temper under which alone the Chriſtian world may hope to obtain again that peace and unity, the bleſſed warmth whereof made the Primitive Churches to flouriſh.

And it is no leſs eaſily evinced that Catholick Recuſancy of Communion with others, is that narrow engine wherewith the Devil hath cramped and tormented the Churches of Chriſt in theſe later ages; and that from thence came Fire and Faggot, Sequeſtrations, Proſcriptions, civil broils, and the reſt of the miſchiefs which have made Chriſtian Kingdoms miſerable through the ſeveral Sects purſuance of their Religious differences, with more bitterneſs than they would have done Mahumetiſm it ſelf.

On which account we can juſtly arraign ſeveral amongſt us for as very Catholick Recuſants, or (which is all one) for as Univerſal Refuſers of Communion with other Chriſtians as any Papiſts, yea, or Ruſſes.

But

But it is evident to all impartially obſervant, that a more humble and charitable Spirit acted the Church of *England* at her Primitive Reformation.

And I hope that this Explicit Combination in her Parochial Aſſemblies pleaded for, will not make any ſuſpect that a leſs inlarged temper is hereby deſigned to be promoted, ſeeing the firſt part of promiſe is, of holding Communion with all Chriſtians: And we all proteſt to take all for Brethren who hold Chriſt as the foundation, and walk by the rule of the New Creature, and we pray for peace on them, and on the Iſrael of God.

But alas this Candor of ours is made ineffectual to keep even all our flocks in their folds through a late complotment of ſome, who, though not intentionally, yet will be found, I fear, eventually to play the Pioneers, and plane the way for the reentrance of the moſt notorious ſort of Catholick Recuſancy.

For it is eaſie to obſerve that the great allurement of our members to turn aſide to the Tents of our Companions is, that ſuch ſeem through their mutual ingagements, to take thoſe that unite to them under a more ſpecial care, for both their temporal and ſpiritual concernments.

Will it then be imprudent to uſe ſome of the Viper in our Antidote, or to cleave the Wood with a Wedge of its own?

When therefore it ſhall appear, that we with no leſs ſolemnity or ſincerity, oblige our ſelves ſo to take care for all of ours, yea and ſtill to let our Fountain of Brotherly Love run over, and be diſperſed in the ſtreets to all others that are Chriſtians, I am apt to think (and it may be moſt of my unprejudiced Readers will be of my mind) that it will be a more effectual courſe to reduce Diſſenters than all diſputes (though evincing with the cleareſt evidence the ſinfulneſs of Separation) have been able to do; and as *Moſes*'s Rod eat up the Rods of the Magicians, the Combination of the Catholick members of the Church of *England* in the Parochial Aſſemblies thereof, would do little leſs to moſt other unwarranted Combinations amongſt us.

For when once the Sober and Conſcientious Diſſenters ſhall be convinced, that all prudent and faithful care is taken, to purge out all leaven of malice and wickedneſs out of our Parochial Congregations, and that they may in thoſe Aſſemblies have green paſtures and ſtill waters alſo, and that Miniſters are ingaged and excited to

purſue the edification of their people in faith and holineſs, then, and not till then it may be hoped, that many pious and humble perſons amongſt them will in a ſmall time fall in with publick Order.

But ſuppoſe that none of thoſe who are departed from our Church ſhould be reduced to the fold again, yet if this Parochial Covenant were ſetled, it would at leaſt ſecure to us, thoſe that at preſent do hold Communion with us, and bind them up ſo cloſe and compact that no more could drop our.

We are not ignorant, that when God hath ſo far proſpered our Miniſtry and Labours in diligent Catechiſing and Preaching and other faithful endeavours, "That any inconſiderate and ignorant perſons have been awakened by us to ſearch and try their hearts, "and waies and turn unto the Lord; as ſoon I ſay as ſuch are obſerved to be grown ſerious in the frame of their Spirits, and regular in their Converſation, preſently they are aſſaulted by ſome Seducer to make one turn further,

"And he ſuggeſts to them, that it is not enough that they have "taken God for their God, and Chriſt for their Saviour by ſerious "and reſolved choice and purpoſe of heart, that they have an uni-"verſal charity for all men, and ſpecial Brotherly-Love unto the Brethren (for all this they were brought to by our Miniſtry) but as if theſe were the *primar* and rudiments of Chriſtianity, they are tempted to remove from under our Miniſtry, who called them into the grace of God, unto another Goſpel.

But the Parochial Stipulation would be an excellent fence againſt theſe Seducers: becauſe our people then would let us know, that they are tempted, and would think themſelves bound to do ſo, having taken us for their Guides by Explicit Contract.

Whereas now (alas) many are turned Renegado's from the Church beyond recovery, and the Miniſter, it may be, is the laſt man in the Pariſh that hears of it.

Moreover, it is not to be doubted, but that ſome or other of their honeſt Neighbours, combined in the ſame Promiſes with them, would take the Alarm, and think themſelves obliged to ſtep in betimes, and endeavour to prevent their falling away, by applying the beſt arguments and counſel they could uſe, and would alſo timely inform the Miniſter and Congregation of the danger of one of the Flock.

Beſides our arguments, that then we ſhould uſe for their confir-

mation

mation in the Unity of the Church, would be ſeriouſly and impartially conſidered, whereas now, they either do not regard us, or ſoon admit the ſuſpicion inſtilled by deceitful workers (that we ſeek theirs, not them.)

But after this mutual contract hath made them ſecure, that it is our care of them only that calls us to their help, we may more eaſily perſwade them impartially to conſider both our arguments, and the diſcourſes written by pious and learned men, in vindication of communion with us, and for the cure of Church Diviſions.

Add to this, that it is more than probable that all the Pariſhioners of the league, would be very careful to ſtudy how to defend their own Conformity to the Orders and Conſtitutions Eccleſiaſtical by Law eſtabliſhed, and would ſtand more zealouſly for the Credit of the ſame, than now many of them think themſelves obliged to do.

For it is obvious to obſerve, that ſcarce a Separatiſt can be met with, but is taught (like one brought up in the School of War and Contention) to ſay more by way of cavilling againſt the publick Settlement, and our Communion therein, than one in twenty of our Lay-Conformiſts can ſay for it, becauſe indeed they do not concern themſelves in the ſtudy of thoſe truths by which our Communion in the ſetled Order is juſtified.

But this explicit Covenant would make them think they are concerned in honour to be able to plead for their way.

And beſides it would urge Miniſters to maintain both publick and private conferences with their people about Church Order and other matters of Religion, and Conferences are but Catechiſing the Elder ſort, as Catechiſing is conference with the Younger.

In ſhort, if either this or ſome other courſe be not taken to excite and quicken the Parochial Miniſters and their Congregations jointly to endeavour either the reforming or elſe the putting away from among themſelves the ſcandalous and notoriouſly vitious perſons, and to unite thoſe who do yet own the ſetled Order, and to fortifie them in the truth and obedience to the ſame, we ſhall ſoon find that not only the Sectarian Catholick Recuſant on the one ſide, and the Popiſh Catholick Recuſant on the other will daily get upon us, and if our banks and ſhores be not better fortified, thoſe two working Seas will eat our Iſland quite through, but alſo that prophaneſs will prevail and overſpread us as a Leproſie, which is moſt of all to be dreaded.

And whether of those two Catholick Recusants, I mean, whether the Romish or the complicated Sectarian will prevail against the other, and keep the field, if once the Church of *England* be dissolved (which hath always been terrible to the Romanists as an Army with Banners) is not difficult to foresee.

For how can the several little bodies and sects, into which the other Dissenters, from the English Protestantism, will be crumbled by division upon division, be able long to bear up against that united interest, which the fine and subtile Romanists will obtain in this Nation, acting in part under the Vizor of other Sects, partly wearing their own profession openly.

For it is easie to observe how their Emissaries (according to instructions) seek another manner of Quarry, & fly at another sort of Game, when they appear as Romanists, than that which some of the other sects do follow; They strive not so much to ingage Meticulous Scrupulous Women and Mechanicks, or narrow spirited Melancholists, or Opinionative Burgers and Traders, these the Romish Fishermen seek not after, but if any such come to their Net, they cast them not away.

But their most taking Arts are laid out for the inveigling young and pregnant Wits in the Universities or elsewhere, who may be trained up to write Polemicks, and practise Politicks, and to ingage Persons of Honour and Interest amongst the Nobility and Gentry (not mattering what their Morals are) who are likely to be of great importance in the legal alteration or settlement of a Nation: and those whom they have gained in their concealed and by-trade as Undertakers and Brokers for other Sects, they will easily turn over into their great bank, when they find it seasonable to unmask themselves.

And this Mystery of iniquity hath been, and is still working, only that which hath letted will lett, till it is taken out of the way, namely, the legal establishment of the Church of *England*, owned by his sacred Majesty and the Laws.

CAP.

CAP. IV.

The Expediency of the Explicit Promiſes to ſecure publick Peace.

THat the publick Peace of Nations is the moſt valuable temporal bleſſing that men enjoy, is without diſpute: And that the peace of *England* would be in a great meaſure ſecured by this Parochial Covenant may eaſily be evidenced.

For firſt, the Doctrine of the Church of *England* doth ſo influence all that are Genuine Sons thereof, as renders them the beſt Subjects in the World, and makes them obey the King and the Laws for Conſcience ſake in all lawful things, and reſtrains from reſiſtance on any account (civil or religious) leſt they ſhould receive to themſelves damnation.

Whether any of the Catholick Recuſants, whether Romiſh or otherwiſe Sectarians be ſo diſpoſed to Obedience to Authority, let their own Writings and Practiſes witneſs in the Gate, for it is not agreeable to the peaceable deſign of theſe Papers to queſtion other mens Loyalty, who own Religion under any form.

But the Sons of the Church of *England* have given ſufficient evidence, that in Conſcience of their Allegiance by Law required, they will not only not reſiſt, but if occaſion be, they will fight for their Soveraign and the eſtabliſhed Laws, and venture life and eſtate in that juſt Service.

And if their own ſins and the ſins of the Nation render their arms ſucceſleſs, they will not only pray ſtill for their Soveraign, but ſuffer with him, yea though they ſhould know beforehand that *Zibah* (the falſe Informer) ſhould keep half ſequeſtred *Mephibo-ſheths* eſtate, even after our Lord the King was returned in peace.

So that his Majeſty might be aſſured that this Parochial Combination would give the Royal Intereſt the ſtrongeſt rooting in the hearts of his ſubjects.

But beſides this way of ſecuring publick peace, by right principling the Subjects, the Parochial Covenant would do much alſo towards prevention of Rebellion.

For it is no ſmall advantage to Governours, in order to the preventing of ſeditions to know beforehand from what quarter they are moſt likely to riſe and blow.

And without all doubt, if a new Civil War ſhould ſpring up in *England* in our daies (which God in mercy prevent) his Majeſty might have the Muſter-roles of his Enemies, by requiring the Catalogues of them, who in the ſeveral Pariſhes becauſe of their prophaneſs are refuſed, or through other pretences do refuſe to combine in Conformity.

But yet far be it from me, to deſign to intimate, that the Scrupulous Diſſenters would make the main body and bulk of any Rebellious Army, or would be the head and contrivers of the War; there are amongſt them unqueſtionably many who fear God and the King.

But we have rather reaſon to ſuſpect (that as it was in our late troubles) the main Contrivers of a War would be prophane and ambitious Politicians, men of the Leviathan-faith (or rather Infidelity) who worſhip not God but Intereſt, and are men of this world only, and reckon nothing Sacred in Government, but the prevalency of Power, which Sacredneſs they know may be preſently vacanted by the Prevalency of a greater oppoſite Power, if they can work themſelves up to it.

Theſe are the men who uſe to contrive and begin troubles in all States and Kingdoms, and (to drive on their deſignes) uſe the furious zeal of perſons Don-Quixotted in Religion, by raiſing in them fanciful fears and jealouſies that their *Diana* is in danger.

However I am ſure that none of the Church of *England* could imbark in a war againſt their Governour for the alteration of the Laws by force of Arms, whithout renouncing their Principles.

And if Piety and Orderly Converſation with Loyalty and Conformity be happily promoted by this ſo probable means of the Parochial Stipulation, I hope many upright perſons amongſt them of the Separation will come in and joyn with us: And thereby I am ſure they would ſilence the importunate calls of them, who require publick teſtification of their Repentance, for being ingaged in hoſtility formerly againſt their Soveraign and his Laws: Their return to the Church of *England*, and Conformity to the Eſtabliſhed Worſhip, was a ſufficiently ſignal declaration of their return to Loyalty.

CHAP.

CAP. V.

The Expediency of the Parochial Stipulation, to make proviſion for the Poor, and increaſe Trade amongſt us.

NO rational perſon can think but that the infinitely wiſe and good God hath made diſtribution of the riches of this world (the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs or inequality) to ſome men a greater, to ſome a leſſer portion, for the exerciſe of his graces in all; that from every outward ſtate there may be a paſſage to the eternal habitations; whilſt the Brethren of high degree teſtifie their gratitude to God, and their love to him and his Chriſt in his poor members by their bounty; And the Brethren of low degree teſtifie their humility and ſubmiſſion to God and dependance upon him; and ſo the abundance of the Charitable rich, and indigency of the pious poor, conſpire into one excellent harmony of many thankſgivings from both of them unto the infinitely good God, who filleth all with his plenty.

But though our Lord hath declared, that it is more bleſſed to give than to receive, and God hath promiſed repayment in good meaſure, preſſed down, ſhaken together, and running over, to the chearful giver; yet we find that the ſpring of moſt mens Charity runs very ſlow and narrow, or elſe, through miſtake, is derived into a wrong Channel.

Here therefore I offer as an expedient in this caſe the Parochial Covenant; For every one of the combination would look upon himſelf as obliged, not only by duty (as Gods Steward of what he had received) but by ſpecial relation alſo to contribute freely towards the relief of all the poor and indigent of the Society, which himſelf is a member of, yea and to the poor of other Chriſtian Societies, (as members with him of the Catholick Church of Chriſt) if there be need, and occaſion be offered him.

And beſides, every member of the Society would imploy his brain as well as his purſe, for the ſervice of the Brotherhood, in contriving how

how all the honeſt members of the body might be ſet on work, and learn (as St. *Paul* adviſeth) to maintain good works for neceſſary uſes: So that hereby every Pariſh would become a kind of Corporation, wherein ſome uſeful manufacture or other would be ſet on foot. And all the little Trades and Ingenuities of the *Hollanders* would be tranſplanted into this Iſland, and improved (as uſually the inventions of other Nations are by the *Engliſh*) to the great benefit of the Nation. And whereas now (to the detriment of the whole Kingdom) the traffick of ſome of the moſt important Trades, is in a manner ingroſſed by Diſſenters (and it is a great temptation to men of Craft and Ingenuity to turn Sectaries, whilſt they ſee, that pretence of Scruples gets an opinion of their honeſty and brings in cuſtom) then the Trade would become more diffuſed, and a fit and equal ſhare therein would be put into the hands of Conſcientious and Loyal Conformiſts, whoſe integrity (by this publick Teſt of a whole Pariſh owning them as members) would be with good advantage repreſented to thoſe they ſhould deal with.

And hereby alſo the Biſhops, and the Parochial Miniſtry under them, would have the advantage to ingage the Contribution of their richer Pariſhioners, for the education of Youths of pregnant and hopeful parts at School, and afterwards at the Univerſities (whoſe friends are not able to give them that breeding;) as alſo for diſpoſing of other poor Children to honeſt Trades. And both the Miniſters and the People combined would be ingaged to look after every one of their Members, "That they did bring up their Children "in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and in ſome honeſt Calling, "and that themſelves walked before their Children as examples of "Chriſtian Converſation.

Which without all peradventure would be the moſt effectual courſe, that ever yet was taken, to cure *England* of that lowſie diſeaſe, which at preſent it is infeſted with, I mean, a numerous Company of vagrant ſturdy beggars; who throng ſo thick at the doors of the good Yeomen of the Nation, that they are certainly the greateſt oppreſſion which the Houſholders in the *North* and *North-weſt* parts of the Nation do groan under.

For I am confident to aſſert, as knowing that I ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs, that many Houſekeepers in thoſe parts do expend twice as much yearly in alms to thoſe Vagrants (if that dole be worthy to be called alms) as they pay in all ſort of ordi-

nary

nary Taxes, and Layes, and Duties to the King, to the Church, and to the Poor of their own Pariſh: Nay, it is not to be doubted, but that that which his Majeſties ſubjects give to ſturdy Vagrants yearly, would Build, and Rigg, and furniſh out at leaſt ten gallant Ships of War in any one year, or rather would build ſufficient Workhouſes, and provide ſufficient Stock to ſet all our poor on work in ſome manufactures about thoſe commodities, that are of Engliſh growth, and may be exported to the great advantage of the Nation.

But when once Pariſhioners are thus embodied by their Covenant, they will eaſily be convinced, that they have fitter Objects for their Charity amongſt themſelves and other Chriſtian Societies, than ſuch ſlaves of luſt and idleneſs as our Vagrants are, and by degrees that miſtaken Charity of Relieving ſuch will grow out of faſhion, being ſwallowed up by that true and warrantable Charity to the poor members of their own and other Chriſtian Congregations; And hereby the Erraticks would be forced to become fixed in their abode, and to endeavour to live like men, if not like Chriſtians alſo.

Object. *But this deſign in ſome meaſure now manifeſted to be like to produce ſuch a general benefit, may be objected againſt as impracticable, by reaſon of the weakneſs of the preſent Miniſtry of the Church of* England, *few of which are equal as to parts and prudence for the management of ſuch a work as this is.*

Anſw. My anſwer is very ſhort and peremptory, if I only ſay, then let them be deprived of their places, and more able Perſons put in their rooms.

But I rather anſwer, that notwithſtanding the ſlanderous inſinuations of ſome prophane Droles and other malignants, I am confident to aſſert, "That there are not many of the Clergy of *Eng-*"*land* (and indeed it is not fit there ſhould be any) who are not "able from the Scriptures of the New and Old Teſtament, to "prove unto the People their miſery both of guilt and impotency "in their lapſed ſtate: And that God hath ſealed a New Covenant "in the blood of Chriſt, wherein he hath promiſed through the "propitiation of that blood, to forgive and blot out the ſins of the "penitent believer, and to give grace and power to reſiſt corrupti-

" on those that are sincere and humble, and smother not, or stifle " their convictions, and to increase Grace from Christs fulness, " to the sincere and diligent, and to secure by his Grace the humble " and the watchful, that they shall not fall away; and that finally " he will give to them (who by patient continuance in well doing, " seek for honour, and glory, and immortality) eternal life.

I doubt not also but that they are able from the Scriptures to prove the contrary threatnings, namely, " That they who resist Gods " Spirit in its motions and convictions (sinning against their light) " are in danger to be given over to a reprobate sense, and to be " estranged wholly from the life of God through a blinded mind, " and hardned heart, and that the Impenitent and Unbelievers, con- " tinuing such, shall perish in their sins, and that he who useth not " his talents, is like to lose them, and that he who trusts to an old " age repentance, or a death-bed change, is in danger to be cut off " in his sins for combring the ground: And that there is unsup- " portable and everlasting indignation and wrath, tribulation and " anguish certainly to come on all those who obey not the truth, " but obey unrighteousness, and die in a state of impenitency and " unbelief.

" I do not question also, but that most of the English Clergy are " furnished with ability to prove the equity, beauty, and real plea- " sure, and benefit of all the holy precepts of the Gospel, and obe- " dience to them, not only from the direct testimony and assertion " of the Scriptures, but also by rational appeals to the light and ex- " perience of those of their Auditors, who have not lost that dig- noscitive power of their souls, whereby their spiritual sense discerns betwixt good and evil: which power whoever hath lost, is not far from the condition of the damned spirits, for he also is reser- ved in the chains of darkness to the judgement of the great day, if God do not in a miracle of mercy break through that darkness, wherein the resolved sinner hath shut up himself.

" Such duties are these, to love God with all our heart, and to " delight our selves in the manifestation of his glory by Jesus " Christ, and to love our Neighbour as our selves, to forgive in- " juries, to compassionate and help them who are miserable, either " by reason of sin, or outward affliction, to delight in those who are " holy upon earth, and to mortifie and crucifie worldly and carnal " lusts, and chearfully to bear the Cross when we suffer for righte- " ousness sake.

" I doubt

"I doubt not also but they can from Scripture, and from the like "rational applications and appeals prove the real danger, unseemli- "ness and unprofitableness of every sin, with the real damage that "sinners suffer by sin, especially in their souls, being thereby "estranged from the life of God and more indisposed than before "the perpetration of it, to the reverence, love, and delight, and "confidence in God, which is the life and happiness of all rational "spirits. I doubt not, I say, but most Ministers can prove this also, to the conviction of them who will ponder and consider the sad influences of their own sins, and have not sinned away the ability of tasting the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.

I do not know that I have set down, either in the promises, precepts, or threatnings, any, but what is necessary to be known by all who live under the means of grace, even by Lay-men.

And if a Parochial Minister hath a competent knowledge of these truths, and can make them out to the conviction and instruction of honest plain men, *who desire to know what they must do to be saved*, and if withal, the Teacher himself be of an holy, humble and sober conversation, he is not to be judged unfit for the Ministry, because he hath not studied the Mathematicks, or Modern Politicks, or cannot humour his Discourses to the pleasing of their Gusto, who go to the Theater with greater devotion than they do to the Church, and prefer a modern and modish Play stuft with that they call wit, namely, interlardings of prophaness and scurrility, far before a serious and seasonable, but plane Sermon.

Object. *If it be objected further, that every Minister that is able to Preach and instruct plain men, is not able to manage the guidance of a Parochial Congregation, wherein may be persons of great learning, and parts, and quality, the Nobility, Gentry, Lawyers and Physicians of the Nation, and can any imagine that these will subject themselves by explicit Promise, to the oversight of the Parochial Clergy, many of which want both experience and prudence to rule their own Houses well, how shall they then take care of the House of God?*

Answ. I Answer, that supposing those Persons of great abilities and qualities to be Christians and Protestants, they will think it agreeable to Scripture and reason, to put themselves into the society of those Christians, amongst whom they do cohabit for the celebration of publick worship administred by some person set apart to that office according to the Order of the Gospel.

If then they own themselves for members of the Church of *England* in their particular Parish Assemblies, their quality and abilities do not exempt them from owning the Parish Minister as their immediate Pastor.

But on the contrary, their better abilities oblige them to give so much more assistance, and incouragement to him in his work. And so the Minister who was not equal to the guidance of a Parish in the single streng.h of his own prudence, will by the advice and countenance of such helps in Government be rendred more able and successful in his work.

And an humble and modest Minister cannot want help sufficient from God, to make his work prosperous, if he be sincere in aiming at Gods Glory, and the good of his people. And if through pride and self-willedness, any balk the advice of worthy and able Parishioners, let complaint be made to the Lord Bishop for his regulation: And indeed so little of Government is betrusted to the Parish Ministers, that they can hardly miscarry for want of political gifts, if they be worthy to be betrusted with the Preaching of the Word, and Administration of the Sacraments.

Besides, amongst us all, the Parochial Assemblies are under the guidance and inspection of the most Reverend Fathers, the Bishops of the several Dioceses: to question whose equality to such a work, will ill become any Member of the Church of *England*.

One consideration more I must take leave to add as a Motive to all the Layety, to wish well to this proposal of mine, namely, that hereby they shall be strongly secured of continual love and peace betwixt themselves and their Ministers.

For after this Mutual Stipulation, the Generality of themselves will of course, and in all reason ought to be, both Arbitrators and Judges of most differences that can possibly arise betwixt any particular Persons of them and their Ministers about Legal dues or otherwaies.

And

And the Patrons, with others of the Nobility and Gentry, will have their juſt Eſteem and Authority in their Pariſhes hereby inlarged, for whilſt they as Stars of the firſt Magnitude by their eminent Quality and Prudence, have chiefeſt influence upon Miniſters, both by way of Incouragement, Direction and Incitement of them to do their duty, they will raiſe a greater veneration of themſelves, both with Miniſters and Pariſhioners, and make all of them ready to exhibit on all occaſions affectionate devotions to the ſervice of ſuch their Benefactors, and their Generous Families.

If then (as I have endeavoured to make good) the natural Productions of this Parochial Explicit Stipulation appear likely to be theſe, The advance of Honour and Authority to our Grandees, of Holineſs and Diligence in our Miniſters, of Love and Unity amongſt the People, and of Loyalty towards our Gracious Soveraign in all his Subjects, I will promiſe my ſelf, that neither the Obſcurity of my ſelf the Propoſer, nor my mean way of managing this excellent Argument, will at all prejudice my Propoſal with true Engliſh Proteſtants.

The Concluſion.

And now I certifie my Reader, that I have provided anſwers to all the other material Objections that I was able to foreſee might be made againſt this innocent and harmleſs Project, whether taken from the manner of Miniſters legal entrance by the preſentations of Patrons, or from the preſent Legally eſtabliſhed Order of Publick Worſhip, or the Miniſters maintenance, *&c.* But conſidering the preſent Criſis of affairs, and that it may be part of the ſubject of the queſtion in ſome of theſe Objections may either be taken away or altered, I thought it beſt to ſuppreſs them, that my Reader might be but little further troubled, than in a bare proſpect of this propoſal; which his own thoughts, I believe, will commend to his approbation, but only thoſe in Authority can command to our practiſe.

At whoſe feet I humbly lay down theſe my endeavours to ſerve God and my Country, and hope they will not reckon it preſumption in me thus to propoſe, ſeeing in a general danger of an inundation every man runs with the beſt materials and inſtruments that he hath, to aſſiſt at ſtrengthning the banks.

And seeing also that I offer nothing to their consideration, but what doth every way comport with the good Laws already made, or to be made by them, and which my just fears of the prevailing of bold impieties, as well as of the attempts of the enemies of our Church, have drawn me to make this publick.

I shall promise my self therefore, that all the pious Members of the Church of *England* will not only make a favourable construction of my design, but promote it by as advantageous a representation of it to those in Authority, as it is capable of in truth and reason. And I hope my Nonconforming Brethren will not think themselves obliged on any account, to endeavour to obstruct what I have represented thus useful and beneficial to us, and no way prejudicial to them: I never intended by making it manifest, that all this might be done, without violation of any part of the legal settlement, to upbraid them, who avouch that they cannot effectually promote faith and holiness, without moving excentrically to the Laws and Constitutions Ecclesiastical.

For I believe, if they had the same apprehensions of Conformity, which I at present have, they would come in and build with us.

Much less did I intend, (as I again protest in the presence of the All-seeing God) to fix the distance betwixt Conformists and Nonconformists by this proposal.

For I shall be far from repining, if those in Authority think fit to remove any thing which may be laid aside without casting reproach on the Parochial Churches conforming to the present legal establishment, or hindring their edification, and without giving scandal to Foraign Churches, or prejudicing Catholick Communion with them.

And as I question not, but that all Momentous Constitutions necessary to those good purposes, will be secured to us by the Piety and Prudence of the Kings most excellent Majesty, who is a true Nursing Father to the Church, and through the advice of his present Parliament (being a Constellation of as eminent Patriots as any Age of our Forefathers saw ever imbodied on the account of the great trust laid upon them) so, if they see fit, to dispense in other things of meaner concernment, whereby Sober and Pious Dissenters may imbody with us, I shall not be wanting to appear amongst those, who will testifie their joy for the healing of our breaches: nor shall I think my own shoe pincheth me because my Brothers steps are more inlarged.

How-

However, I hope that all amongſt us, and amongſt them alſo, who would rejoyce over the Churches of Chriſt, beholding their Order and Stedfaſtneſs, will eaſily unite in this prayer to the great Shepheard of the Sheep, "That he will continue and ſtrengthen amongſt "us his ſtaves of bands and of beauty, that if ever the *Aſſyrian* "ſhall attempt to come into our Land, or tread in our Palaces, we may be able to raiſe up againſt him ſeven Shepheards, and eight Principal men. And let all the people ſay, *Amen.*

Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good will amongſt men.

FINIS.